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ABSTRACT

This book reviews the findings of 29 studies published between 1960 and 1992 on the impact of childhood out-of-home care on adults' self-sufficiency, adjustment, family and social support, and personal well-being. Section 1, "Out-of-Home Care and Out-of-Home Care Studies," introduces the study and presents the history of out-of-home care in the United States. Section 2, "Methodology," details the conceptual framework; differentiates descriptive, trend, and evaluative studies; and describes the method used to identify and judge the design adequacy of out-of-home care studies. Section 3, "Findings," presents the findings on outcomes of out-of-home care. The results indicate that, in comparison to those not receiving childhood out-of-home care, adults placed in childhood out-of-home care had poorer school performance; higher rates of school dropout, public assistance, homelessness, arrest, and chemical dependency; lower marriage rates; and poorer mental and physical health. They typically maintain contact with at least one biological family member, have reasonable social support systems, and do not differ from the general population in unemployment rate. Factors associated with outcomes include the type of placement, reason for admission, age at placement and discharge, number of placements, time in care, disposition, caseworker activity, and contact and closeness with biological and foster families. Section 4, "Summary and Conclusions," summarizes the outcomes experienced, discusses factors associated with outcomes of out-of-home care, and offers recommendations for future research and program and policy development. Appendices summarize outcome studies of out-of-home care in tabular and narrative form and summarize studies relating out-of-home care to homelessness. (Contains about 80 references.) (KDFB)